

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated December 4, 2003 (U.S. Patent Office Paper No. 11242003). In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

As outlined above, claims 15 and 16 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, while claims 13, 18, and 19 are being amended to correct formal errors and to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject invention. Support for the amendments made to claims 18 and 19 can be found in the Specification, for example on page 27, paragraph [0042] Claims 1 to 12 and 14 have been canceled in a previous communication with the office.

Formal Objections or Rejections

Claims 15 and 16 were objected to due to several informalities. Applicants respectfully submit that as shown above, claims 15 and 16 have been canceled.

Claims 13 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for being indefinite. In particular, the Examiner points out to a few grammatical errors and suggests corrections. Applicants welcome the Examiner's suggestions and submit that they have amended claim 13 to incorporate the Examiner's suggestions.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 15, 16, 18, and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Ohta *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 6,208,399 (further, Ohta '399).

Claims 15, 16, 18, and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Yamazaki, U.S. Patent No. 6,531,713 (further, Yamazaki '713).

Applicants respectfully submit that, as shown above claims 15 and 16 have been canceled. Therefore, the above rejections regarding claims 15 and 16 are rendered moot.

Claims 18 and 19 depend from and add features to allowable independent claim 13. Therefore, they are also allowable for at least the reasons that pertain to claim 13.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner's indication that claims 13 and 17 are directed to allowable subject matter is gratefully acknowledged.

Conclusion

In view of all the above, Applicants respectfully submit that certain clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art references upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely. These differences are more than sufficient that the present invention as now claimed would not have been anticipated nor rendered obvious given the prior art. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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